CHAPTER X

THE BEGINNINGS OF AGRICULTURE

I. AGRICULTURAL SETTLEMENTS

(1) EUSSIA

(a) *The Old Colonies*

A DECREE of Tsar Alexander I in 1804, regulating the position of the Jews, marks the first attempt at resettling them in agriculture, in which they had practically nowhere been engaged since the Middle Ages.[1] By that decree they were forbidden to inhabit villages or to engage in the liquor trade, which was then their main trade, but, within the Jewish Pale of Settlement, were allowed to buy or farm land in special Jewish colonies, outside the existing villages. Moreover, grants of State lands were made to them in so-called "New Russia"—the sparsely populated govern-ments of Kherson and Yekaterinoslav—which had only just been placed under a regular administration. The Russian Government hoped to settle there 60,000 Jewish families, hitherto engaged in the liquor trade and now deprived of their means of subsistence; but by 1815 the nine colonies, founded since 1804, all in Kherson, comprised only 600 families and an aggregate population of 3852. After an

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[1] Besides the medieval agricultural settlements in Southern Europe (see p. 130), there were some Jewish villages in Northern Mesopotamia, *e.g.* Sandur, about seventy miles north of Mosul, where, to this day, there are some sixty Jewish families. Also in the village of Pekiin, in Northern Palestine, the Jews have, for many centuries, lived as peasants. In the sixteenth century, according to Dubnow *(WeltgescJiickte,* voL vi. p. 289), there were Jews in Lithuania and Poland cultivating gardens and orchards, and, in some cases, farms,